

Contributed

THE BOOK PUBLISHING POLICY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

R. E. Magill, Secretary.

A recent number of The Presbyterian of the South contained an article by the Rev. W. L. Lingle, D. D., of Atlanta, Ga., concerning the policy of the Publication Committee in the matter of publishing books and making special inquiry about a volume of sermons by the Rev. G. B. Strickler, D. D., now in course of preparation. The article was in fine spirit and voiced a query in the minds of many who do not understand the restrictions placed upon the publication of books by the General Assembly. Space is therefore asked for a brief statement as to Dr. Strickler's book and the limitations under which we are working. First, as to the volume of sermons it should be said that Dr. Strickler has never sought publicity through the printed page, or any other medium, and that the manuscript for the forthcoming volume was prepared at the earnest solicitation of some of his friends who felt that his great doctrinal sermons should be preserved in permanent form. A former pupil initiated the movement and agreed to look after publishing details, and with this phase of the work Dr. Strickler has had no connection. With the hope of securing a circulation for the book North as well as South, arrangements were made with a New York publisher to issue the book. A cash deposit was required and made before the matter was put in type. The work was never offered to our committee and it is proper to say had it come to us it would have received favorable consideration. We shall assist in the sale of the book and will furnish it at \$1 postpaid, the price fixed by the publisher. Dr. Strickler is an honored and efficient member of the Publication Committee and the valuable contribution he has made, and is making to the life of our Church as a theologian, teacher and preacher is fully appreciated by our body.

A word as to why the Assembly placed such rigid restrictions around the further publication of books by our committee.

When an inventory of the assets of the committee was taken after the death of the honored Dr. Hazen it was found that about \$75,000 was invested in plates and bound and unbound volumes issued during the forty years of the committee's existence.

The original editions had never had a large sale and it was apparent the plates would never be required for re-print editions.

The present secretary reported to the Assembly that the plate stock would be reduced from the book value (or cost price) to its market value and that an effort would be made to dispose of the accumulation of some 50,000 volumes of books at greatly reduced prices. A per-

sistent and expensive advertising campaign was conducted to induce the people to buy these books which represented the best efforts of the greatest men our Church has produced and prices were reduced from 40 to 75 per cent. The sales showed no material improvement and a large part of the bound volumes were finally offered for the mere cost of postage or in other words, a \$3 book was offered for about 18 cents. This extraordinary offer only moved the stock of bound volumes, but no sort of a proposition since has aroused sufficient interest to warrant having more of the stock bound and it lies today in our basement a hopelessly dead asset.

The plates from which the books were printed were reduced from \$32,000 to \$2,000, which represents the present value of the stock, based chiefly on the price they would bring as old lead. The inventory value of the printed sheets has been reduced to less than one-sixth of the original cost and will soon be eliminated entirely and the Assembly has been advised of all the facts.

In view of the fact that the publication of books has entailed a loss of from forty to fifty thousand dollars the Assembly very wisely ordered that in future the Publication Committee should endeavor to protect the Church from loss before undertaking the publication of a book. Under this order of the Assembly we now require that the cost of printing a book shall be practically assured by the owner of the manuscript either by a guarantee of the sale of a fixed number of copies, or the payment outright of the printing and binding cost.

While the restriction has greatly reduced the output of books, it is interesting to note that the publications of our committee for the past seven years have greatly enriched the world's store of religious literature. The following notable books have been issued during this period:

Apologetics—Rev. F. R. Beattie, D. D.
The Flag of the Covenant—Rev. R. P. Kerr, D. D.

Pioneering in Africa—Rev. S. P. Ver-
ner.

Life and Letters of R. L. Dabney—T. C. Johnson, D. D.

Discussions of Theological Questions—J. L. Girardeau, D. D.

Selected Sermons of Moses D. Hoge, D. D.

A Year in Europe (3,000 copies)—W. W. Moore, D. D.

Modern Mysticism—J. B. Shearer, D. D.

The Creed of Christ—Rev. R. V. Lancaster.

Life and Letters of B. M. Palmer, D. D.—T. C. Johnson, D. D.

The Sermon on the Mount—J. B. Shearer, D. D.

Handbook of Prophecy—James Stacey, D. D.

The Call of the Home Land—A. L. Phillips, D. D.

Virginia Presbyterianism—T. C. Johnson, D. D.

Studies in the Life of Christ—J. B. Shearer, D. D.

The Scriptures—Fundamental Facts—J. B. Shearer, D. D.

Westminster Teacher Training Course (11,500 copies).

Selected Sermons—W. G. Neville, D. D.
Studies in the Old Testament—J. B. Shearer, D. D.

Calvin Memorial Addresses at Savannah Assembly.

The last named book is probably the most notable contribution yet made to the literature about the great reformer, and yet our church has taken less than 500 copies of the edition of one thousand. We have also used four editions or over 4,000 copies of Dr. E. W. Smith's "Creed of Presbyterians," and have distributed a large number of Dr. R. C. Reed's historical work, "The History of the Presbyterians."

During the same period tracts and leaflets running into hundreds of thousands have been issued and our annual output of printed matter, including Sunday school periodicals, now exceeds one hundred million pages.

We have in press a book by Rev. S. R. Gammon, D. D., entitled, "The Evangelical Invasion of Brazil," which will be one of the great missionary books of 1910.

It is worthy of note, by way of comparison, that the Publication Board of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., with a membership of one and a quarter million and over six thousand ministers, has issued only ten theological and five missionary books during the past five years. Had the publishing boards of the four smaller Presbyterian bodies combined their issues of theological books for the past five years they would hardly have equaled our list.

It is a matter of regret that the Church does not show a proper appreciation of the meritorious literary work of her sons, but we face a "condition, not a theory," and the Assembly has met the situation with a rule which is based on sound business principle.

We have published books the people ought to read, but they insist on buying what they want to read.

Our membership is possessed of a high order of intelligence and a discriminating taste in the selection of reading matter and when we inform them from time to time about books of current interest and merit we are following the letter and spirit of the Assembly's orders that we shall conduct a general book business in connection with our publication work.

"DECLINE OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE."

Leslie's Weekly has been investigating the church attendance, and as a result of such investigation has reached the conclusion that the least change has taken place in the South. It attributes the prime cause to the present distractions in the style of living. At one time church services were the chief intellectual and social features of the week, but there is more going on in the way of picture shows, lectures, dominoes, auto riding and other wordly amusements. Some lay much blame upon the higher criticisms, and the unsettling of men's faith;